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AUTHOR Zeman, James V.
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ABSTRACT

Student input into grading in the basic speech communication course can be accomplished through a peer evaluation system. Three student evaluators are assigned for every student speech. Speeches are given a quality score by the peer evaluators and by the instructor. Rating errors are minimized by assigning peer evaluators so that no cross-evaluation occurs among a set of peers on any particular speaking assignment. Rank scores indicating the relative effectiveness of each speaker for a given class period are obtained from students not assigned as speakers or evaluators. All scores are combined for each of five speeches given during the term. Final course grades reflect total points awarded each speaker compared to total points possible. (A speech evaluation form, sample evaluation assignments, and handouts for the students explaining the scoring system are appended.) (SRT)

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A METHOD OF USING STUDENT EVALUATIONS IN THE BASIC COURSE

JAMES V. ZEMAN
Northern State College
Aberdeen, SD

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CS 505 486

All instructors in public speaking courses have wondered about the means for effectively determining the grades for the students in the courses. Many of us believe that we have acquired through experience a fair method of determining those grades. Because we are aware that we don't uniformly view speeches the same, it becomes important to determine a system for grading that may represent as fair a grading of the students as possible.

This paper looks at a method of utilizing student input in the determination of grades of a speech course. This method is for usage in a course employing a public speaking format. This paper will be divided into two parts. The first part will look at a rationale for using student input, including some of the advantages and possible problems. The second portion of the paper will look at a method of implementing student input, including a scoring system that involves use of both student ratings (quality scores) and student rankings (relative scores).

The system for utilizing student input will involve a scoring system, rather than a letter grading system. Each speech will be scored and the final total for the speeches and other class work will determine the final course grade.

Rationale for Peer Evaluations

Several studies have indicated that pooled judges resulted in more reliable evaluation than using a single judge.[1] Most of us are convinced that student evaluations serve a vital role in providing the student comments from peers. Evidence suggests that the students find comments from their colleagues to be

helpful in nature.[2] Further, many instructors believe that to have the student serve as an evaluator forces the student to more actively examine the components of good public speaking, provides training in criticism, and gives the student practice in adjusting to criticism from others.[3]

Disadvantages in Peer Evaluations

Several rating errors have been described in the literature.[4] The leniency error is one where the rater may be too easy or too hard in the evaluations of all persons being evaluated. The halo error is one where the rater may be too easy or too hard in the evaluation of a specific person being evaluated. The trait error is one where the rater may be too easy or too hard on specific categories in a rating scale.

The literature gives evidence the three described rating errors are found in the evaluation of public speakers by peers.[5] Some evidence suggests that training may reduce some of the rating errors.[6]

A Numeric Scoring System

In an attempt to develop a system that would utilize peer evaluation as a portion of determining the course grade and yet reduce potential problems from rater error, a numerical system was devised that would use a combination of instructor (quality) evaluations, peer (quality) evaluations, and peer rankings. These are not new concepts, having been employed by others in the speech course.[7]

Quality Score Determinations

Each speech is given a quality score by the instructor and by a panel of peers. These quality scores are based on a ten point scale. (See Attachment A.) Students are instructed that a minimally acceptable score for each area on the evaluation form is a score of "5." Other quality levels are also discussed prior to the first speech. On the first speech, only the instructor gives a quality score (which then will count double in the scoring system).

Comments on specific areas to be "emphasized" for each speech are presented prior to each new speech. For example, prior to the value speech, students are given the following directions about what to be particularly concerned with for evaluations.

> When filling out the evaluation form, ask the following questions. Did the speaker really treat the speech as a question of value? Were you able to clearly pick out the speaker's thesis? Were the main points clear and related to the thesis? Did the speaker provide adequate support for his/her claims? Did the speaker amplify (give the source and reliability) the support? Was the introduction of the speech effective? Was the conclusion of the speech effective? Did the speaker use sufficient transitions to allow you to follow the ideas? Was the speech delivered well vocally? Was the speaker's platform behavior appropriate?

Some research has indicated that person who are to serve as speakers are more likely to have rating errors.[8] To help minimize this problem, peer evaluators are assigned so that no person who is evaluated by a peer for that particular speaking assignment will evaluate anyone who evaluated them earlier or who will evaluate them later on that speech. Evaluation assignments

are not handed out until the day of the speech. An example of the peer evaluation assignments appears in Attachment B. For a single set of speeches, each speaker would receive three peer evaluations and each member of the class would serve as an evaluator three times (absences may require a person serving as an evaluator four times). Each evaluator is to completely fill out the evaluation form (same as used by the instructor), giving both numerical scores and written comments.

When speeches for a class period are completed, the evaluators are supposed to take part in the "comment and question" period, with the first listed evaluator serving as the chairperson for the comment portion. Evaluator comments are most often positive, suggesting what the speakers have done well. The instructor attempts to see that for any one period that a complete range of presentation goals are commented on by the time the comments for the period are completed.

Rank Score Determinations

Rank scores are obtained by having the students that are not assigned as speakers for a class period (this includes all those assigned to serve as peer evaluators for that period) indicate the relative effectiveness of the speakers that spoke for that class period. They are instructed to rank the speakers on the sheet given them at the start of the class period that listed the speakers and the assigned evaluators. They are told to "Rank the person you felt most effective today as number one, the one next effective as number two, and so on. If you believe that some of the speakers are equally effective give them equal ranking."

Each of the evaluators is also expected to sign their rank score slip prior to handing it in. The slips are collected prior to the start of the "question and comment" period following the speeches (this is to eliminate any impact the comments might have on the rankings).

After the slips are collected and prior to the next class session the "rank scores" are determined by listing the rank given each speaker by each of the evaluators and totalling those scores. The speaker with the lowest total ends up with a ranking of one, the speaker with the next lowest total gets a ranking of two, and so forth. If the two of the speakers end up with the same numerical total, they are given a tie for the appropriate rank (this tie is later considered in assigning the "rank score"). When the ranking is then determined for each of the speaker for that particular class period, the speakers are given a rank score. The exact value of the rank score varies, depending on the number of persons giving speeches for that class period. (See Attachment C.)

Course Grading

Scores are recorded for each of the five speeches given during the term. Students are also given points for outlines that are acceptable, a "class" score (including points for handing in other written work and attendance on days when persons are speaking), and a final test score. The points are simply totalled at the end of the term and, based on where they are on a scale, the student is given a grade (see Attachment D).

Endnotes

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3. Wiseman, G. & Barker, L. (1966). Peer group instruction: What is it? Speech Teacher, 15, 220-223.

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Attachment A

SPEECH EVALUATION

Speaker_____ Date_____

Critic_____ Period_____

Problem_____

Thesis_____

Problem Area_____
- appropriate
- adequately analyzed

Introduction and Conclusion_____
- creates interest and attention
- thesis clear and specific
- adequately concludes

Thesis Development_____
- main points relevant to thesis
- adequate support of thesis
- unified ideas
- coherence

Support of Assertion_____
- quality assertion support
- adequate assertion support

Language_____
- appropriate phrasing
- grammar
- imagery
- accuracy

Physical Delivery_____
- posture
- gestures
- eye contact
- transitional movements
- appearance

Voice_____
- rate
- intensity
- pitch
- quality
- timing

Audience Response_____

SCALE FOR SCORING

Circle ONE number

Superior 10 - 9 - 8 - 7 - 6 - 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 Poor

Attachment B

Sample Peer Evaluation Assignments

Value Speech 10/14

Speaker	Evaluators
Lisa Foland	Lange, Hartley, Burke
Tammy Schock	LaMont, Rogers, Dirk
Shawn Mann	Burke, Jennings, Rivect
Penny Kittelson	Dirk, Brandenburger, Apland
Deb McCurdy	Rivett, Nissen, Gross
Laura Jungwirth	Apland, Dinger, Lange
Charlene Goldade	Gross, Lang, LaMont

Value Speech 10/16

Speaker	Evaluators
Linda Lange	Hartley, Schock, Jennings
Dan LaMont	Rogers, Mann, Brandenburger
Julie Burke	Jennings, Kittelson, Nissen
Greg Dirk	Brandenburger, McCurdy, Dinger
Leslie Rivett	Nissen, Jungwirth, Lang
Diane Apland	Dinger, Goldade, Hartley
June Gross	Lang, Foland, Rogers

Value Speech 10/21

Speaker	Evaluators
Dawn Hartley	Mann, Burke, McCurdy
Tom Rogers	Kittelson, Dirk, Jungwirth
Paul Jennings	McCurdy, Rivett, Goldade
Tresa Brandenburger	Jungwirth, Apland, Foland
Deanna Nissen	Goldade, Gross, Schock
Sandy Dinger	Foland, Lange, Mann
Laura Lang	Schock, LaMont, Kittelson

Attachment C

The following are a listing of the rank scores that are awarded based upon the size of the group speaking for that particular class period.

If there are four in your group:

rank	score
1	9
2	7
3	5
4	4

If there are five in your group:

rank	score
1	10
2	8
3	6
4	4
5	4

If there are six in your group:

rank	score
1	10
2	8
3	7
4	5
5	4
6	4

If there are seven in your group:

rank	score
1	10
2	9
3	7
4	6
5	5
6	4
7	4

If there are eight in your group:

rank	score
1	10
2	9
3	8
4	7
5	6
6	5
7	4
8	4

If there are nine in your group:

rank	score
1	10
2	9
3	8
4	7
5	6
6	5
7	4
8	4
9	4

If there are ten in your group:

rank	score	rank	score
1	10	6	6
2	9	7	5
3	8	8	4
4	7	9	4
5	6	10	4

Attachment D

Speeches are scored NOT graded; however, the scores are translated into a grade at the conclusion of the term. Each speech will receive three scores: a quality score (instructor), a second quality score (peer average), and a rank score. Time will be considered a portion of the quality score.

Rank scores are determined as follows:

If there are four in your group:

rank	score
1	9
2	7
3	5
4	4

If there are five in your group:

rank	score
1	10
2	8
3	6
4	4
5	4

If there are six in your group:

rank	score
1	10
2	8
3	7
4	5
5	4
6	4

Speeches given for excused absences are automatically ranked at a value of six points for the first excused time and at one for subsequent times. The only exception to this policy on excused absences is for the individual with chronic illness who presents a proper note. Unexcused absences on days you are expected to serve as an evaluator will also result in a reduction of final total points.

Assuming that you receive a quality score of seven and are given a score of six by the peer average, these will be added to your rank score (assume third in a group of six) as shown.

7 - instructor quality
6 - peer quality
6 - rank score
19 - total score

The total score is then multiplied by four when recorded in the grade book. The recorded score for the above example would be 76.

Outlines are given a score of five points when they are acceptable. Outlines that may have been unacceptable when initially handed in may still receive the full credit, if changes are made to make them correct.

The final speech and outline are each worth double the value of previous speeches.

Name	Fact	Def.	Value	Policy	Value	Test	Class	Total
John Doe	64/5	88/5	NS	52/5	168/10	134	25	456
Jane Smith	96/5	88/5	104/5	96/5	196/10	190	100	900
Possible	120/5	120/5	120/5	120/5	240/10	200	100	1050
		Scale - A-895		B-795	C-680	D-585		